



ADS Chapter 558

Use of Social Media for Public Engagement

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ADS 558 – Use of Social Media for Public Engagement

558.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) encourages the use of social media and online platforms to publicize the work of the Agency, and to engage with development partners and learn from stakeholder communities in coordination with the existing media outreach and efforts of the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA). Maintaining the image, reputation, and brand integrity of USAID is necessary on social media. The guidelines in this ADS chapter were developed to help social media managers establish, manage, and protect online identities of USAID. LPA is responsible for the management of Agency-level communications and messaging, while Missions and Bureaus/Independent Offices (B/IOs) manage subject matter platforms to communicate the specific work of their focus area(s).

This chapter provides broad guidance as it relates to the establishment of social media sites on behalf of USAID. This chapter does not in any way restrict an employee's ability to establish such sites or comment on sites in their personal capacity. However, in their personal capacity, employees must be mindful of their responsibility to refrain from creating any impression of government sanction of comments. For questions on this matter, employees should contact the Office of the General Counsel, Office of Ethics and Administration (GC/EA) (see [ADS Chapter 508, USAID Privacy Program](#), [ADS Chapter 545, Information Systems Security](#), [ADS 565, Physical Security Programs \(Domestic\)](#), and [ADS Chapter 566, U.S. Direct-Hire and PASA/RSSA Personnel Security Program](#)).

558.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

a. The **Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA)** is responsible for approving and creating all new, official USAID social media accounts, with the exception of those created and maintained by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and ensuring that existing accounts remain active. LPA also approves social media toolkits consisting of example posts, tweets, and imagery describing and supporting Agency initiatives for dissemination within the Agency and to external stakeholders.

b. **Functional and Regional Bureaus and Missions** are responsible for creating content for their social media channels and clearing content through the appropriate technical staff. Organizational leaders will consult with special personnel, such as Development Objective Teams and Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs), before and after an award is made, to determine the need for a social media account, including any requirements in the awards for social media accounts specific to the project.

c. Social media managers are designated individuals in Missions, Bureaus/Independent Offices (B/IOs) who are responsible for managing approved social media sites on behalf of USAID.

d. The **Bureau for Management, Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO)**, in conjunction with LPA, is responsible for providing training on social media security, privacy, and usage standards.

558.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

558.3.1 Official USAID Accounts

558.3.1.1 Creation of an Official Social Media Account

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

An official social media account is an account created for the purpose of officially representing and/or promoting the Agency's brand, Bureaus, programs, and activities. This account is created or maintained by current employees who represent/promote the Agency as part of their assigned work duties. Employees can obtain an application for a new account on LPA's [Web site](#). LPA will review all applications and provide a response within two weeks of submission.

In order to maintain consistency of brand and voice across the Agency, LPA must approve and create all new social media accounts for B/IOs and Missions. Requesting parties must demonstrate that:

- A need exists for the requested channel,
- There is an active audience not currently being reached through existing channels, and
- There is a communications strategy and depth of content adequate to support the social media channel over the long-term.

Please note: Social media accounts will not be created for events or short-term projects unless specifically approved by LPA.

The Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs must approve access to social media channels (outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, etc.). In order for the Agency or an Agency unit to use a social media channel, a Federal-Compatible Terms of Service (TOS) agreement must be signed with the provider. A list of GSA-Approved social media channels is available at www.digitalgov.gov.

558.3.1.2 Branding a USAID Social Media Account

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Bureaus/Independent Offices, Missions, and USAID leadership may apply for USAID branded pages. LPA will review applications within two weeks. Once a new account is approved, LPA will create and appropriately brand the new account in accordance with USAID's [Branding and Marking policy](#) and [Graphic Standards Manual](#). The LPA Web Management team will provide necessary training for social media managers prior to activating the social media account and will provide regular guidance for content on an ongoing basis. All social media accounts must display approved USAID branding and a link to the USAID Privacy Policy (www.usaid.gov/privacy-policy). In rare circumstances, additional or substitute presidential initiative branding may apply.

558.3.1.3 Social Media Account Managers

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Prior to establishing a new presence or assuming the duties as a new social media account manager, B/IO and Mission staff who have been selected to maintain and manage a social media account must receive training by M/CIO and LPA on social media security, privacy, and usage standards. Additional training may be required because of the fluid nature of the social media environment (see [ADS 320, Branding and Marking](#)).

558.3.1.4 Account Security

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

At all times, a minimum of two members of the B/IO or Mission staff must have access to the social media account. They will regulate authority over the accounts. If a USAID social media account is compromised, the user must report the incident to the CIO Help Desk (cio-helpdesk@usaid.gov or (202) 712-1234) immediately.

558.3.1.5 Dormant Accounts

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Dormant social media accounts that are not updated regularly are subject to deletion by LPA. Dormant accounts are defined as accounts that have not been updated in at least 180 days.

The unique requirements of social media sites necessitate regular maintenance and posting (i.e., engaging with audiences). For regular postings standards, please visit LPA's [social media Web site](#). Appropriate activity includes, but is not limited to:

- Actively utilizing these platforms,
- Responding to audience comments or questions,

- Posting timely and relevant information, and
- Ensuring postings are aligned with the respective projects' communications strategies.

LPA reserves the right to have these sites closed. Prior to deletion/deactivation, LPA will notify the social media manager(s) and they will have 15 days to challenge this decision.

558.3.2 USAID Affiliated Accounts

558.3.2.1 Creation and Maintenance of a USAID-Affiliated Social Media Account for Procurement

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

The Development Objective Team (DOT) (also known as the Activity/Project Design Phase Team) must determine the social media approach and platforms during the activity design phase of the project. The Mission Communication Officer must be a part of the DOT when determining the need for social media properties. Any social media must only be used for the project's development objectives and no other purpose.

When the DOT has determined that social media will be part of an activity, and the activity will be implemented through a contract, the Statement of Work must include a requirement that

- Describes the social media approach, platforms, and properties for the activity;
- States that all social media must only be used to meet development objectives;
- Social media strategies for all planned social media sites must be submitted to the COR for approval;
- At any time during the project, USAID reserves the right to close any social media account of a contractor if USAID deems it necessary; and
- At the end of the contract, all social media accounts must be closed.

The COR and Mission Communication Officer must review planned social media sites to ensure that

- The site is for development programmatic purposes;
- The site includes a project description; and

- The site is appropriately linked to related sites, such as the Mission's social media outlets.

558.3.2.2 Maintenance of a USAID Affiliated Social Media Account

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

An overarching communications strategy and complementary social media strategy are required for all projects engaging in digitally-based outreach activities. If the DOT has determined that social media will be part of an activity, the scope of work must include the requirements in **558.3.2.1** and require contractors to submit the social media strategy to the COR for approval. The contractor must consult with the COR, who will work with the DOC, to align the social media account with the Mission's overall communications strategy and messaging.

USAID must reserve the right in the contract to have these social media accounts closed if the CO, in consultation with the COR and DOC, determines that a contractor is not using these platforms appropriately (see **558.3.1.5** for appropriate activity usage).

558.3.2.3 Branding of a USAID Affiliated Social Media Account

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Social media accounts used by projects funded under USAID acquisition awards must reflect USAID branding per the USAID policies and procedures in [ADS 320](#). Under cooperative agreements and grants, sites will reflect USAID co-branding policies and regulations as stated in [ADS 320](#) and [2 CFR §700.16](#). Sites funded by multiple partners will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by USAID and other partners.

558.3.3 Content Management for Social Media Accounts

558.3.3.1 Required Clearances

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

The B/IO or Mission managing the social media account must determine the appropriate clearance process for posting content to an official social media account. For affiliated and partner sites, these requirements will be defined in the implementing agreement, in consultation with the DOC and LPA.

558.3.3.2 Consistency of Content

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Official and affiliated social media channels reflect upon the Agency; therefore, social media managers and, by extension, their leadership must ensure that content:

- Is consistent in quality and accessibility;
- Provides clear and accurate information to the general public;
- Conforms to overall design, branding, and navigation requirements;
- Is consistent with stated Agency public positions, messaging, and communications strategies;
- Does not include sensitive information, to include personally identifiable information (PII);
- Conforms with USAID Privacy Policy; and
- Meets other requirements as outlined in [ADS Chapter 557, Public Information](#).

Social media account users must safeguard USAID information online.

558.3.4 Crisis Communications for Official Social Media Accounts

558.3.4.1 Crisis Preparedness

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

If directed by leadership, social media managers must put procedures in place to address social media usage during emergencies or crises. Generally, platforms should not be silent during these times and should implement plans to communicate timely, accurate information via social media. A large amount of the public receives its news through social media, and increasingly, people are reaching out via social media for answers. As official government channels, social media platforms can be used to transmit pertinent, reliable, official information during times of crisis. Social media managers must realize that crisis management is a continuous process. Each phase of planning requires constant review and revision in order to maintain effectiveness.

558.3.4.2 Disaster Response

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Guidance on social media messaging should be part of an overall crisis communications plan. Messaging about U.S. Government responses to disasters must be coordinated with LPA and USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. Depending on the scope of the crisis, social media managers should consider suspending scheduled messages to clear the platforms for crisis-related communications. Social media managers should use social media to monitor what others are saying during times of crises, and engage, when appropriate.

558.3.4.3 Using Social Media as a Response to Media Reports

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Official and affiliated social media account managers must not use social media to engage in response to reports in other media such as newspapers, broadcast, and online reports. Any use of social media in messaging regarding media reports must be made only in collaboration with the designated LPA liaison and in consultation with LPA.

558.3.5 Privacy

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

OMB Memorandum M-10-23 requires that a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) be completed whenever an agency uses a third party website or application that makes PII available to the Agency.

558.3.5.1 Web Site Privacy Policy

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

All official USAID social media accounts must provide a prominent link to the USAID Privacy Policy Web site (<http://www.usaid.gov/privacy-policy>). This should appear in the description text of the main landing page or on the “About Us” page.

Official USAID social media accounts are required to comply with [USAID's Privacy Policy](#). Official accounts may not use a third party's privacy policy without prior approval from the Privacy Office (M/CIO). All official accounts must include a link to USAID's TOS agreement in the platform's “About” or “Bio” section.

A separate privacy policy specific to that account must be approved by the Privacy Office if the official account

- Uses web measurement or analytic tools (e.g., Google Analytics);
- Uses web customization tools (e.g., session or persistent cookies);
- Uses locational data in ways which can be used to identify individuals;
- Uses embedded applications; or
- Solicits or collects PII from the public.

558.3.6 Security**558.3.6.1 Unauthorized Use**

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Users of official USAID social media accounts must take appropriate precautions to safeguard accounts from unauthorized use, hacking, or defacement. Users are required to take the *Social Media Security for Account Managers* training course on [USAID University](#) in order to learn the best ways to protect themselves and USAID social media assets.

558.3.7 Records Management

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Official USAID social media accounts are required to comply with USAID's [Records Management Policy](#).

558.3.7.1 Personal Use of Social Media

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

Per [ADS 502.3.4.1](#), all social media content is a permanent record. Adherence to the following policies will mitigate the risk posed by publishing official records on social media sites:

- Avoid using any social media outlet to publish, promote, or present original, official federal record materials regardless of the format. Instead, these official records should be presented on the Agency Web site with appropriate linkage from social media.
- Avoid creating new material that pertains to USAID for use only on social networking sites. Instead, use existing material from USAID Web sites or previously published documents; and
- In a personal capacity, refrain from making comments or responding to comments on social media regarding official USAID business unless you are a designated spokesperson. As a part of official duties, social media managers and other communicators, working in coordination with appropriate leadership and subject matter experts, may engage on comment strings to answer questions or correct factual inaccuracies.

558.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES**558.4.1 External Mandatory References**

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

a. [2 CFR 700](#)

- b. [Negotiated Terms of Service Agreements](#)
- c. [OMB Memorandum M-10-23, Guidance for Agency Use of Third Party Websites and Applications, \(June 25, 2010\)](#)
- d. [Social Media Strategy Planning Resource](#)
- e. [Strategic Communications Planning Template](#)

558.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

- a. [ADS 320, Branding and Marking](#)
- b. [ADS 502, Records Management Policy](#)
- c. [ADS 508, The USAID Privacy Program](#)
- d. [ADS 545, Information Systems Security](#)
- e. [ADS 557, Public Information](#)
- f. [ADS 561, Security Responsibilities](#)
- g. [New Social Media Account Request Form \(Intranet\)](#)
- h. [USAID Website Privacy Policy](#)

558.5 ADDITIONAL HELP

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

There are no Additional Help documents for this chapter.

558.6 DEFINITIONS

Effective Date: 03/17/2016

social media

Applications and/or Web sites allowing users to engage in social networking.
(Chapter 558)

social media account

An account created for the purpose of officially representing and/or promoting the Agency's brand, Bureaus, programs, and activities. (Chapter 558)

TOS Agreement

A written terms of service agreement between a third-party social media application and its users. (Chapter 558)

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